



CEDEFOP

European Centre
for the Development
of Vocational Training



European Economic and Social Committee



SECOND POLICY LEARNING FORUM on upskilling pathways

20-21 May 2019

EESC | JDE building | Rue Belliard 99, Brussels

Concept note

Policy learning fora (PLFs), developed by Cedefop, are opportunities for countries to discuss critical challenges they face, generate knowledge and help them to learn from each other. Bringing together relevant VET stakeholders from different countries PLFs may also act as a site of consensus-building around shared problems.

In February 2018, Cedefop, together with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and in collaboration with the European Commission, organised the first [Policy learning forum \(PLF\) on upskilling pathways: a vision for the future](#), to bring together governments, social partners and civil society to help one another in the definition and implementation of *Upskilling pathways: new opportunities for adults*¹. The PLF was conceived as the first in a series of policy learning events on the topic aimed at creating a platform for countries to come together to learn from one another and explore common challenges in upskilling adults with low level of skills.

The 2018 PLF demonstrated that establishing an adequate social dialogue and involving social partners and other relevant civil society organisations in the design and implementation of the upskilling pathways vision is crucial. Different stakeholders generally hold similar views on aims and challenges of upskilling adults with low levels of skills, hence confirming that existing differences can be overcome through debate and consensus building.

¹ Council of the European Union (2016) Council recommendation of 19 December 2016 on upskilling pathways: new opportunities for adults. *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 484, 24.12.2016. [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016H1224\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016H1224(01)&from=EN)



Cedefop and EESC second policy learning forum on upskilling pathways: a vision for the future starts from here. It builds on the outcomes and common challenges identified in the 2018 PLF (see Box 1) and aims at bringing together stakeholders to support them in the implementation of upskilling pathways for adults.

Box 1: Main common challenges identified in Cedefop EESC 2018 policy learning forum on upskilling pathways

**2018 PLF ON UPSKILLING PATHWAYS CONCLUSIONS:
MAIN COMMON CHALLENGES AHEAD**

The policy learning forum showed that there are some fundamental questions that need to be addressed in the implementation of the upskilling pathways that are common in most countries:

- ⇒ How can a common vision for upskilling pathways be created and shared by all relevant stakeholders?
- ⇒ How can a consistent and synergic approach across different policies be achieved?
- ⇒ What mechanisms exist to engage employers and in particular SMEs in the design and implementation of the upskilling pathways?
- ⇒ How can local communities and civil society be involved in the process and contribute to out-reach for low-skilled adults?
- ⇒ Who will be responsible for tailoring training for the individuals and in what way will it be delivered and connected to prior learning?
- ⇒ How trust is built and quality assured in the process of upskilling pathways?
- ⇒ What financial and non-financial measures are in place, or can be implemented, to assure the sustainability of the upskilling pathways?

The second policy learning forum on upskilling pathways: a vision for the future

The magnitude of the low skills phenomenon and the associated economic and social costs² calls for a renewed approach to upskilling adults, which addresses upskilling in a comprehensive and strategic manner. This enables the pulling together of various resources while exploiting synergies across the different measures as well as policies largely already in place across European countries.

² Cedefop (2017). Investing in skills pays off: the economic and social cost of low-skilled adults in the EU. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop research paper; No 60.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.2801/23250>



The 2018 PLF showed that while many countries are already equipped to provide skills identification, training provision tailored to individuals' needs and/or validation and recognition of prior learning, much needs to be done in bringing together these services in a coordinated manner and within a coherent strategy. A coordinated and coherent approach to the upskilling of adults, however, needs to be embedded in a system that recognises the heterogeneity of the low skilled population, with its different needs and characteristics.

A comprehensive and strategic approach to upskilling adults will not be able to confront the skills challenge which lies ahead unless it is able to engage those most in need of upskilling to take part in all aspects of creating and implementing upskilling pathways. Besides tailored outreaching measures, work-based learning may have a key role to play in ensuring that every adult has a chance to fulfil his/her potential.

In view of continuing support to Member States, Iceland and Norway in addressing the challenges associated with assuring access to opportunities for all adults, particularly those who are most in need, in preparation for this PLF (and in the framework of Cedefop's ongoing study the "Potential of WBL in developing upskilling pathways for adults") Cedefop has:

- Carried out a detailed quantitative analysis mapping the adult population in potential need of upskilling, and, according to this data, identified priority target groups in need of upskilling in the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway;
- Developed a draft analytical framework for designing and implementing upskilling pathways for adults, which identifies key elements and ingredients for a well-functioning and strategic approach to upskilling adults.

During this PLF, participants will have the opportunity to work together to:

- Reflect and discuss the needs and policy responses aimed at the different priority target groups of low-skilled adults identified;
- Share their experience and learn how other countries organise their approach to upskilling adults and what is the contribution of the social partners and other civil society organisations;
- Reflect on different visions of upskilling adults, across and within countries, and discuss evolving approaches to upskilling;



- Discuss, refine and customise the analytical framework for upskilling adults as to address specific priorities and challenges at national level.

Discussions should lead to the following expected outcomes:

- Increased awareness of the importance of a shared vision of upskilling adults and understanding of the different models across and within countries;
- Familiarisation with modes of organising upskilling pathways for adults in countries with similar and different approaches to it;
- Understanding of changes and developments in EU countries, Iceland and Norway;
- Increased knowledge on priority target groups, or sub-sets of the population, in need of upskilling in the EU countries, Iceland and Norway and how to best address them;
- Refined analytical framework for upskilling adults which countries will then be able to adapt and customise as to address national-specific priorities and challenges.

Analytical framework for developing Upskilling Pathways for adults

Methodology

The draft analytical framework is an ongoing working document aimed at supporting key stakeholders to develop strategic and coordinated approaches to upskilling pathways for adults. This draft analytical framework has been developed by bringing together various resources and knowledge generated within Cedefop at the Department for learning and employability, in the areas of adult learning, early leaving from education and training, financing, guidance, validation, and work-based learning.

The methodology applied for developing this first version of the analytical framework included extensive literature review and good practice analysis aimed at identifying important systemic features for developing a coordinated and coherent approach to upskilling pathways for adults. These features are organized around ten (10) key areas of the policy process as described in Figure 1. Although it might appear to present a normative stance, the analytical framework is intended as an ongoing basis for discussion and a tool for countries to identify key areas for action. It will be provided to all participants and thoroughly discussed during the PLF, both in the parallel and plenary sessions. Following the meeting, it



will be further refined, enriched and reviewed on the basis of the outcomes and feedback received by stakeholders.

Figure 1: Draft analytical framework for developing upskilling pathways for adults: 10 key areas of the policy process

Decision-making level

1. Integrated approach to upskilling pathways for adults
2. Identification of target groups
3. Governance (Multilevel/multi-stakeholder)
4. Monitoring and evaluation

Support level

5. Financial and non-financial support
6. Outreach
7. Lifelong guidance system

Implementation level

8. Skills assessment
9. (A) Tailored learning offer leading to a formal qualification
(B) Tailored-learning offer with work-based learning (WBL)
10. Validation and recognition of skills and competences